



# FOCUS

January 2016 | Vol. 39 Issue 1

## A Message from Rev. Heike Werder

Welcome to the New Year 2016! I pray that you will be able to live into an exciting, healthy, and successful new year. If you have made any new year's resolutions, find the strength to see them through. If you want things to stay as they are – even if just for a moment – nothing wrong with that. But most importantly, build upon the graces and blessings that have already entered your life. God has provided for us all; all we have to do is look closely.

Here at the church, we are starting a new chapter in our journey together. A small search committee, comprised of Deacons and one Board member are in the process of selecting an Interim Pastor who will be able to lead us through the changes, as a congregation, we need to address, that were raised by the Rev. Patricia Hayes in the fall. I am looking forward to having a ministerial colleague on board to share the regular ministry we are doing, and I am greatly interested in learning from past year's events and how to turn them into strengths and experiences for growth and healing.

My prayer is that you will be part of this work. The idea is that an Interim Pastor with the right expertise will lead us in the process of reconciliation. The hope is that once we have worked through our issues, we will emerge stronger as a congregation.

In this work we need each other. As we begin this new chapter, here is what I believe is needed from each one of us.



1. We draw strength and encouragement from each other. So don't forget to show up, even if you are on the fence about the church because God works through people and through God's church.

2. Your voice is important. Constructive criticism might open doors that might have otherwise remained closed.

3. No one person can fix the places that are broken. Like every caregiver, sometimes I wish that I could fix things for you. I can't. It is something we have to do together, allowing God to help us and nurture healing. I will do my best to walk with you, listen to God alongside of you, and offer advice when and where it seems appropriate and welcome. But there are spiritual decisions that are all your own.

4. Bring your gifts to the table. Jesus didn't call the Lone Ranger. He called twelve people who were asked to find twelve more, who – over the centuries – have called billions of others. You are God's gift to the world in the making and there are contributions that only you can make. Be generous in offering those gifts. Don't wait to be asked, but let us know what you have to offer. Our lives will be enriched and yours will become more of what God created you to be.

5. Pray for us. It will be a challenging year for the church. But it will also be a year filled with potential and growth. Please, pray for us!

Peace and Blessings,  
Heike.

**save  
THE DATE!**

**Sunday, January 31st  
11am - Annual Meeting**

## Music Ministry News by Valerie Becker, Director of Music



With Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas over, it is time to say thank you to all of the choirs, and the Friendly Chimers for their hard work throughout the holiday season and the past year. Our Christmas Concert on December 6th was inspiring and we all wish to thank our sponsors for helping to make this concert a reality. Thank you also to the many people behind the scenes who baked, set-up, cleaned- up and made phone calls for this concert. And of course a big HUG goes out to Doris Cook, for organizing such a lovely reception.

On December 24th, our annual Christmas Pageant took place under the direction of Teresa Blume and Heather Salerno. Their organization and skill made this event a true success. I am always amazed that this pageant can happen with such few rehearsals. KUDOS to everyone involved!

So now it is time to think about the year ahead. There is new music to learn and there are new events to plan! Hopefully our

weather will cooperate and we will have a calm, uneventful winter!

The Happiest of New Years to everyone!  
Valerie

### FOCUS

Focus is published monthly. Contributions from members and friends of the Church are invited. Please submit materials by e-mail to [office@needhamucc.org](mailto:office@needhamucc.org).

February issue deadline:  
**Thursday, January 21.**

Rev. Heike Werder  
Assoc. Minister  
[revheike@needhamucc.org](mailto:revheike@needhamucc.org)

Maddie Downer  
CE & Youth Director  
[youth@needhamucc.org](mailto:youth@needhamucc.org)

Danielle Jurdan  
Administrator  
[office@needhamucc.org](mailto:office@needhamucc.org)

Valerie Becker  
Music Director  
[musicdirector@needhamucc.org](mailto:musicdirector@needhamucc.org)

Cindy Sullivan  
Office Assistant  
[office2@needhamucc.org](mailto:office2@needhamucc.org)

Rev. Dr. Paul Clayton,  
Pastor Emeritus



### Partner-Family Letters DUE

If you haven't already e-mailed David Johnson your Partner Family letter, please do so by January 3rd. Time is getting short to get the letters sent out to our volunteer translators in time to send them down with the February delegation. Dave's e-mail: [DaveBJohnson@verizon.net](mailto:DaveBJohnson@verizon.net). Thank you.



### Alternative Giving Raises Funds for the Computer Center

Thanks to those of you who made donations via Alternative Giving, which will help offset the increase in computer center fees for middle school students in Santa María Tzejá. Hopefully this will mean that more families can afford to send their children to middle school starting this month.

### February Delegation To Guatemala

The church's February delegation will be in Guatemala from February 10-21. Co-leaders are Brenda Metzler and Fred Moder, with additional travelers Jackie Allen, Jerry Durbin, Susan McNeice, Scott and Joene Pike, and 3 additional travelers from Oregon and Colorado. We're looking forward to taking down letters from partner-families and scholarship donors, school and medical supplies, and funding for middle school teacher salaries (including a marimba teacher!), the computer center, and project funds for the village. Please plan to join family, friends, and supporters for a brief Delegation Send-Off gathering on Tuesday, February 9th, from 7-8 pm at Dave and Caryl Johnson's, 505 Great Plain Avenue.

**A NOTE OF THANKS FROM REV. HEIKE**  
**TO THE CONGREGATION**

Dear members and friends of the Congregational Church of Needham,

I was deeply touched and surprised by the many well wishes and generous gifts you gave me in recognition of my 50th birthday. It took me about three and half hours reading all the cards with I did on my actual birthday.

The thoughtfulness of the gifts are delightful. If you haven't tried massage, do it. It is the best health insurance for your body and spirit. Jamie and I will enjoy a weekend at Kripalu (or add a little money and stay longer) which is the most peaceful place I know to go to.

Thank you! For your kindness and generosity but most of all for your love for the church and our congregation.

In grateful appreciation,



**Thank you!**

Dear Friends:

It was my pleasure to organize the reception following the wonderful Christmas concert.

I Thank all who so Graciously donated such a great variety of foods. You made my project fun to do , and it made me feel connected to the concert and reception even though I could not attend. Thanks to Lynn McClelland, Chair of the Music Team, for her hard work and for overseeing the kitchen crew.

Also a big thanks to my extended church family for your prayers and many kind things during my illness.

I miss everyone and church.

Thank you so much.

Love to all,  
 Doris

**FROM MADDIE, CE & YOUTH DIRECTOR**

Dear ones,

We've done it! We told the story of Jesus's birth in a manger, the angel appearing to the shepherds, the star leading the kings to find God in a needy and yearning world. We did it - with your help!

Thank you very much to the many, many people who made this year's family worship service and pageant such a beautiful moment together:

Director & Producer extraordinaire: Teresa Blume & Heather Salerno

Choir director & musician: Cici Hunt

Soloist: Kirby Salerno

Cast: Jackie Allen, Mia Allen, Ken Allen, Sam Atallah, Leyna Blume, Kiersten Blume, Phil Bradham, Sam Bradham, Ashley Bradham, Courtney Brennan, Joy Brewer, Rachel Busby, Anna Busby, Tess Busby, Hannah Clifford, Meriel Conroy,

Catherine Davis, Claire Dirks, Isabel Dirks, Bella George, Jenny George, Jake George, Josie George, Nora Gutilla, Rena Hall, Samuel Hall, Haley Huff, Allison Hunnicutt Amy Hurley, Lina Hurley, Connor Hurley, Elizabeth Kuhlman, Caroline Mahar, Robert Mahar, Katie Memory, Lilly Meyi, Max Meyi, Alex Morrison, Owen Noone, Ellie Noone, Natalie Orr, Abby Orr, Jamal Ortiz, Lucie Salerno, Miles Salerno, Liam Salerno, Kirby Salerno, Tillie Slosser, Cole Tometsko, Ella Tometsko, Stella Wiesel, Adeline Wiesel, Laine Wiesel, Heidi Wiesel, Taylor Williams, Eliza Williams

Crew: Gretchen Allen, Olivia Allen, Nancy Bradham

Lights: M.E. Sesso, Claudia Sesso

Lunch: the Men's Breakfast group

Thank you also to all the parents of pageant actors, and to the beloved community who joined us on Christmas Eve to revel in the joy of the Christ child coming to us once again. Thank you, thank you, thank you all for sharing your gifts in many ways in such a beautiful retelling of this holy story.

Blessings,  
 Maddie

# YOUTH NEWS

@ the Congregational Church of Needham

Maddie Downer, CE & Youth Director

Jan. 2016

## NEW CHILDREN'S CHAPEL ALTAR!

Every Sunday, the children and pre-teens in our congregation gather together before going to their classes to worship together. We sing and stretch, we laugh and pray, we tell stories and learn about God and ourselves. Now we have an altar that is just for us - a physical signal in a beautiful space that this time with God is ours!



The altar, which rolls and can be easily stored when the chapel is used for other purposes, is currently quite bland. Although painted, there is a large swath just waiting to be filled in with our children's hopes and dreams and adoration of God.

Children are invited to bring small items and images for the mosaic that will adorn the front of the new altar. Maddie will create the mosaic using the items and images the kids bring as inspiration.

Over the next month, Maddie will collect these items during chapel time so parents, please remind your child to think of something they would like to add and bring it with them. Note: these items will not be

returned as they will add to our worship space!

Is your child stumped about what to bring? Suggestions: small, mostly-flat toys (Lego characters, a pair of Barbie's shoes, a Hot Wheels car, Squinkies/Shopkins, blind box minis), a coin/souvenir from a place that they have traveled to, a picture (of them, their family, their friends, a hero), some beads that they think are beautiful, a copy of a poem they've written or a picture they've painted, shells they found on a beach, a key, a charm that reflects an interest, the list goes on and on...

Make it a family activity! Take an afternoon with your child(ren) and talk about all the things that you love about church. Share with each other what gifts you bring to the church - do they sing in choir? Are you on a committee? Do you all participate in the Christmas pageant? Ask your children what is special about them that they want the church to know about? What symbol or item would be a good reminder of that special part of them? Together, find something that reflects this.

Maddie will be collecting mosaic items during chapel time through January 31st. She will design and assemble the mosaic on the front of the altar and it will be presented during Children's chapel in late February.

## WHAT TO DO SUNDAY MORNINGS...

Infants, toddlers, and pre-K children are offered an inviting and active space. Our teachers play active games, tell stories, and do crafts with the older children as well as provide care for younger children. Care is offered from 9:50 a.m. until the end of the worship service and is located in the Noah's Ark Preschool room.

Bible Village: Students in Kindergarten through grade 5 are invited to participate in our Bible Village Sunday School program. Most Sundays, children begin in the Sanctuary before moving to the chapel and then downstairs to their classes. On Communion Sundays, children begin in the chapel at 10 am and join their families for Communion in the sanctuary.

BV 6:8: Our program for students in grades 6-8 takes place in the lounge area in Stevenson Hall. Currently, students follow the same routine as Bible Village classes and break off after chapel time for discussion and activities.

## CLUB 3-4-5

Club 3-4-5 will begin meeting in February! This youth group is open to students in grades 3-5 and will meet on the 2nd Thursday of the month in Stevenson Hall. Additional off-site events may be held on the 4th Thursday of the month.

Why should your child join Club 3-4-5? To make friends, have fun, participate in community service activities, to move and dance and sing, to talk about the things that matter to them, and to learn more about God, Jesus, and how to be the very best version of themselves!

**SAVE THE DATE for our inaugural meeting!**  
**Thursday, February 11**  
**6:30 - 7:30 PM**  
**Stevenson Hall**

# YOUTH News

@ the Congregational Church of Needham

Maddie Downer, CE & Youth Director

## NEW CURRICULUM FOR GRADES BV6:8!

We started our year off by using a curriculum that looks at biblical themes in the Harry Potter movies. This was a fun introduction to getting to know each other and to starting to talk about important themes.

Now, at the beginning of the new year, we will start in on a new curriculum: Nooma. This curriculum was created by Rob Bell, author of **Love Wins** and **What We Talk About When We Talk About God**. It looks at many different aspects of our lives and offers an invitation to discussion for all; the short-film-based curriculum always inspires some really great discussion about how we see ourselves, how we relate to others, and how we know God. This will be a way for us to go further in our time together.

## Super Bowl Subs: Orders begin Jan. 17th!

The Junior and Senior High Youth Group will be taking orders for Super Bowl Subs & Chili!



Order forms will be available on the CE & Youth Bulletin Board near the main stairwell and a printable form online at: <http://needhamucc.org/superbowl/>

All order forms should be submitted to Maddie Downer via the church office or her mailbox in the copy room.

Date	Jr High Youth Group	Sr High Youth Group
Sun., January 10	5-6:30pm -- <i>Post-Christmas Party</i> Please bring a wrapped Yankee Swap item. This could be a regift, a handmade item, etc. Silly and funny and just plain weird always make it fun! Ugly sweaters encouraged but not required.	7:00 - 8:30 -- <i>Post-Christmas Party</i> Please bring a wrapped Yankee Swap item. This could be a regift, a handmade item, etc. Silly and funny and just plain weird always make it fun! Ugly sweaters encouraged but not required.
Sun., January 17	<i>Super Bowl Subs sales begin</i>	
Sun., January 24	<i>SR High Ski Trip - No evening programming</i>	
*Sun., January 31	5:30 - 8pm -- <i>Dinner &amp; Games at Dave &amp; Buster's - Braintree, MA</i> Meet at church at 5:30; return to church at 8:00. - Event fee: \$20	<i>No Sr High Programming</i>
Sun., February 7	<b>SUPER BOWL SUB ASSEMBLY!!</b> <b>Assembly: 9:00am   Pickups: 11-11:45am</b> <i>Please note start time is later!</i>  Youth gather to assemble the subs we've sold over the past weeks. Pickup and additional sales will occur after the church service. Doughnuts and hot cocoa/coffee will be on hand to fuel our sandwich making. No PM programming.	
*Sat., February 13	4:00 - 6:00pm -- <i>JR High Youth Group Party at Plaster Funtime (RSVP required)</i> Meet at Plaster Funtime, Needham St. in Newton. Pizza will be served.	<i>No Sr High Programming</i>
Sun., February 14	<i>No evening programming</i>	
Sun., February 21	5:00 - 6:30pm -- <i>JR High meets</i>	7:00 - 8 :30pm -- <i>SR High Meets</i>
Sun., February 28	<i>No Jr High Programming</i>	5:30pm -- <i>Monster Mini Golf Trip (RSVP required) Norwood, MA</i> Leave church at 5:30 pm
LOOKING AHEAD TO MARCH...	JR High Winter Retreat, Mar. 4-6	SR High Dave & Buster's Dinner & Games, Mar. 13

## ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTRIES TEAM NEWS

...EARTH STEWARDSHIP FOR OUR LIVES TODAY...

### CLIMATE DEAL LAUDED BY UCC ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATES, COMPLIANCE NOW UP TO US

December 14, 2015

Written by Connie Larkman

Now that nearly 200 nations have approved the first global pact to fight climate change that calls on the world to collectively cut carbon pollution, what happens next? UCC environmental advocates are calling on people of faith to put pressure on the fossil fuel industry and on world governments to ensure compliance.

"The world's climate negotiators have finally realized that nature doesn't negotiate," said the Rev. Jim Antal, conference minister and president of the Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ. "Now it's up to the people to make the fossil fuel industry comply with both science and hope."

The "Paris Agreement" adopted Sat., Dec 13., during the climate change conference (COP21) aims to keep global temperatures from rising another degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) between now and 2100 and pledges to limit the amount of greenhouse gas pollution created by human activity to the levels that trees, soil and oceans can naturally absorb, beginning in 2050. The historic accord, the first pact to ask all countries to join the fight against global warming, now faces ratification by 55 governments before taking effect.

"From Pope Francis and Desmond Tutu to the UCC's Jim Antal and Earth Ministry's LeeAnne Beres, the faith community showed tremendous leadership in the months leading up to the Paris climate talks," said the Rev. Brooks Berndt, UCC environmental justice minister. "With the new international climate accord, faith leadership -- especially in local congregations -- will become all the more important. Regardless of what one thinks of the agreement, one thing is certain: in seeking to end the fossil fuel era as rapidly as possible, moral action is needed to make sure local policies reflect global aspirations."

france-filtered.jpgAntal agrees. "Whatever your view of what COP21 accomplished, what matters for our children and grandchildren is that each of

us embrace the vocation of our generation to assure that the highest aspirations of this agreement are achieved. That will only happen if people of every faith perspective -- and of no faith perspective -- persistently witness with our wallets, publically proclaim our politics, and boldly disrupt business as usual with our bodies."

Berndt noted that the United Church of Christ is once again taking a leadership role by launching a campaign in Greater Cleveland, home to the denomination's national offices, to collect signatures of interfaith leaders on a letter that calls upon local utilities to achieve 30 percent renewable energy within 5 years and then continually increase target goals in five-year increments until 100 percent renewable energy is achieved.

"We launched this sign-on letter for faith leaders in the Cleveland area last week, and we have already been encouraged by the results," said Berndt. "With 35 faith leaders on board, we are well on our way to our goal of more than 50 signers. Those who have signed represent an array of faiths including Islam and Judaism along with long-standing ecumenical allies like the Disciples of Christ and Presbyterian (USA). This letter is truly a model for what faith communities can do around the country. More sign-on letters that target local officials and utilities would give concrete shape to the new direction our world so desperately needs. This is the kind of concrete action that is now needed by faith communities everywhere."

"When the UCC Synod voted to divest 2-1/2 years ago, no one imagined that the world community would divest \$3.4 trillion as a prelude to the Paris climate talks," said Antal. "Negotiators heard 'keep it in the ground' from investors and activists alike. And in response, negotiators from almost 200 countries delivered an agreement with enough aspiration to give hope a chance. This accord was accomplished thanks to courageous scientists like Naomi Oreskes and activist leaders like Bill McKibben, along with the millions of people who have persistently stood up for creation."

Now, Antal says, it's time for the real work to begin. "Grateful that business leaders stepped up in Paris, it's time for people of faith to step out into the streets and demand that politicians fulfill their obligation to future generations and to the common good."

*Reprinted with permission of United Church News*

<http://www.ucc.org/news/climate-deal-lauded-by-ucc-environmental-advocates-12142015>

# JANUARY 2016

Sunday	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thursday	Fri.	Sat.
					1	2
<b>3 Worship - with Maddie Downer Bible Study</b>	<b>4 Cancer Support Group</b>	5	6	<b>7 Lunch with Heike</b>	8	9
<b>10 Worship Bible Study</b>	<b>11 Cancer Support Group</b>	12	13	14	15	16
<b>17 Men's Breakfast Worship Bible Study</b>	18 MLK Jr. Day Office Closed	19	20	<b>21 Faith Circle Book Club</b>	22	23
<b>24 Worship Annual Hearing</b>	<b>25 Cancer Support Group</b>	26	27	<b>28 Faith Circle Book Club</b>	29	30
<b>31 Worship Annual Meeting</b>						

### COMMUNITY DINNERS

6-7pm, January 5 & February 2  
Linden Hall



Once a month we offer dinner for the families of Baby Basics and the volunteers involved in the program. Everyone is invited to join us for dinner, and/or if you are looking for a volunteer opportunity for your family, this is an opportunity for children and adult alike. Dinners are on the first Tuesday of the month.

Help is needed with shopping for food, meal preparation, eating with our guests, and clean up.

Please contact Rev. Heike or Diana Conroy if you are interested in participating in the service project.

### THURSDAY LUNCHEONS WITH REV. HEIKE

Noon-1pm, January 7 & February 4  
1180 Great Plain Ave.

If you are available for a different kind of lunch break, why not have lunch at the church on the first Thursday of the month and weekly during the season of Advent and Lent?

Rev. Heike will be offering a delicious, nutritious soup, good bread, and dessert. The cost for the lunch is \$ 3.00 per person, and we have purchased take-out containers for take-away.

Our Thursday luncheons will take place in our new building at 1180 Great Plain Avenue. Lenten Lunches start on February 11, and continue on the 18, 25, March 3, 10, and 17.

### FAITH CIRCLE BOOK GROUP

Jan 21, 28, Feb. 4, 11, 25, March 3, 17, & 24th  
1154 GPA Reception Rom

If you have are interested and to find out what book we will be reading contact Christine Weitzel at [cweitzel@verizon.net](mailto:cweitzel@verizon.net)

## FRIENDLY SOCIETY NEWS

- The Friendly Society will take a winter recess from January through March. We'll see you again in April and May.
- Please stay well, walk/drive with care, and reach out to friends and acquaintances. Any questions, contact Joanne Seiden (781-449-6535; [jseiden@basiclink.com](mailto:jseiden@basiclink.com))

## INTERESTED IN BECOMING A WORSHIP ASSISTANT?

If you wish to participate in our worship services by being a worship assistant, please contact Rev. Heike or Joanne Seiden. The worship assistant leads the congregation in the Call to Worship and the Unison Prayer.





CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH OF NEEDHAM

1154 Great Plain Avenue  
1180 Great Plain Avenue  
Needham, MA 02492-2202

T: 781-444-2510  
[office@needhamucc.org](mailto:office@needhamucc.org)



## Men's Fellowship Breakfast, Sunday January 17th

On Sunday, 1/17, the Men's Breakfast Fellowship will welcome all church men to breakfast.

The Men's Breakfast brings men of all ages and persuasions together in the Library on the 3rd Sunday of the month before worship in honest and lively discussion touching our faith and our lives in today's complex world. We welcome men of all ages and accommodate those with scheduling challenges. Arrive at 8:15 AM for fellowship and breakfast or by 9:00 AM for the discussion.

Contact: John Baldwin ([jsbaldwin@comcast.net](mailto:jsbaldwin@comcast.net)) or Rob Dunlavey ([rob@robd.com](mailto:rob@robd.com)) for more information.

## Confirmation 2016

Confirmation Class 2016 is starting in February, and Rev. Heike is looking for confirmation mentors who will accompany this year class.

If you are interested in being a mentor for the first time, or are willing to "re-up", please be in touch with Rev. Heike ([revheike@needhamucc.org](mailto:revheike@needhamucc.org)). Once the final number of confirmands has been determined, she will also make some calls.

Mentorship is one of the most rewarding tasks within the church. What a gift it is to pass on your faith to the next generation. Please think about becoming a mentor. The program lasts 12 weeks (Monday evenings from 6 to 8 pm, dinner included), and finishes May 15, 2016 on Pentecost Sunday.

address

stamp

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF  
NEEDHAM  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
1154 Great Plain Avenue  
Needham, Massachusetts 02492-2202